

Someone to Stay by Aceofstars16

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Summary:

After the events of "The Lost Sister", Papa continues to haunt El, but this time she can't reassure herself that he is gone. She needs to know if he is alive, but she can't bring herself to check...until it becomes too much. Thankfully, she doesn't have to face it alone.

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Author's Note:

[Tumblr post](#)

Papa. He had been haunting her for over a year, destroying her dreams, breaking her down with his never forgotten words. But now it was different. When she closed her eyes, El could see him again and any reassurances that he couldn't hurt her anymore fell away. Kali's words rang around in her head, the images of Papa that had been created in her mind, and the ever-prevailing question echoing through her brain. Was he really gone? She could find out. It would only take a moment. But fear gripped her every time she thought of it. Because if he was, would she ever sleep again?

She wanted to tell Hopper. Every time Papa's words tormented her, she wanted to go to her new dad, to feel safe again. But whenever a nightmare woke her, she found herself stalling. What if he wanted to know the reason behind her fear? She regretted leaving the cabin and she didn't know if she was ready to tell him what had happened with Kali, even if it haunted her.

And so, she tried to stay strong, hoping that maybe it would stop with time. She should've known it would only be a matter of time before she couldn't stay strong anymore.

Hopper knew something was up. El hadn't always been very open about her feelings – though some days she was very honest about what she thought – but her eyes seemed to flicker to the floor quicker, her reassurances that she was okay were a little too rushed. It had been a while since she had come to him with nightmares. At first he thought that was a good sign, maybe she was healing from all of the crap she had been through. But then he noticed the circles under her eyes, the fear that would flash through her eyes for a second, as if something was haunting her.

Despite the signs of a struggle, she wasn't coming to him. In all honesty, it stung a little. But Hopper was determined to be patient with her. He would do what he could, reminding her that she was safe and he was there for her all while hoping she would confide in him when she was ready.

A scream jolted Hopper out of his sleep. In one movement he had grabbed his gun and stood up, quickly looking around for any sign of danger, but he was only met with the dark cabin. After a moment however, he heard quiet sobs.

Setting down the gun, Hopper quickly made his way to El's room, knocking quietly before opening the door. And there she was, her head buried in her knees, arms shaking as she hugged her legs.

"El?" Hopper said quietly.

No response, only more shaking, more sobbing, as if she hadn't even heard him.

Taking a few steps forward, Hopper carefully sat on the bed. "El." He said again before reaching forward and placing a hand on her shoulder.

Her head jerked up, a panic lighting her eyes as she jumped backwards. For a moment, her gaze seemed to go right through him, but slowly her eyes focused on him. Recognition dawned on her face even as tears built up in her eyes again.

"Dad," she whispered quietly before flinging herself at him as another sob escaped her.

Hopper quickly wrapped his arms around her, holding her close.

"It's okay kid, it's okay," he said softly, wishing he could do more for her. She had been through so much, far more than any girl her age should have to go through. It broke his heart and he knew if he could take away her pain, her fear, her trauma, he would - even if it meant he would've never met her.

Arms tightening around him was the only response El gave as sobs continued to escape her mouth, muffled by Hopper's shirt. There wasn't much more he could do except be there, so he stayed where he was, holding her close, rocking her gently, hoping to comfort her in anyway he could, and most importantly, remind her she wasn't alone.

Seconds turned into minutes and Hopper didn't let go until El's grip lessened and she leaned back a little, though she still rested her head on his chest.

"Better?" Hopper asked, running a hand through her hair.

Silence.

Letting out a breath, Hopper rested his hand on her head, his thumb rubbing her hair, wishing he knew what he could do to help.

A moment. Then another. Second after second, then. "Is Papa really gone?"

So, that abusive creep that was haunting her again? "Of course, he's long gone."

A second. "What if he..." her voice broke off for a moment.

"El, look at me."

She lifted her head, looking at him. Tears had started pooling in her eyes again.

"He's gone. He's not getting you."

"I...I need to know..." She looked down, swallowing what must have been another sob.

"There are plenty of people who have confirmed that he's gone. He's dead El."

She shook her head then looked at him again. "I need to know."

Determination was set in her gaze, though fear still lined her face. It

was then that Hopper realized what she meant.

“You don’t have to, El,” he said, but her gaze was set and he sighed before looking around the room and spotting the black bandanna he knew she had used before. Getting up, he grabbed it and held it out for El.

Her dark eyes studied it for a moment before accepting it and wrapping it around her eyes.

“Woah, slow down, I still need to go the TV.”

Her hands stopped mid-tie and she shook her head. “I don’t need it.”

That was new, but then again, she had gone from needing a sensory deprivation tank to only needing static so maybe he shouldn’t have been so surprised.

“Okay...need anything else?”

El didn’t speak, but after a moment she held out her hand. Sitting down, Hopper grabbed it and then waited, watching as blood slowly dripped out of her nose, wishing he could do more. A whimper sounded in her throat, then a quiet, “Papa...no...no!”

“He can’t hurt you here El,” Hopper said quickly, squeezing her hand.

“No. No!” El’s hand shot up as she tore off the bandana, tears were streaming from her eyes again and her whole body was shaking.

Without a word, Hopper pulled her into a hug again, not knowing what she had seen but knowing one thing. Brenner was still alive, he was still out there, and odd were, he would be looking for El.

“He’s not going to get you, kid. I promise.”

Sobs were her only response and resentment grew in Hopper’s chest. Brenner wouldn’t get El, he would make sure of that. And if that psychotic doctor ever showed his face in Hawkins again Hopper would aim a few well aimed punches to his face. Because no one was going to take his girl away from him, never again.